

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Welfare of Blinds

1654. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the allocation made for welfare of blinds;
- (b) whether it is a fact that only 8 to 10 per cent of blind children get basic school education in view of limited funding; and
- (c) if so, the action proposed to grant more funds for welfare of blinds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) There is no separate budget provision for visual disability. During the current financial year, 2000-01, a provision of Rs. 230.10 crore (Plan) and Rs. 31.05 crore (Non-Plan) has been provided in the budget of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the disability sector, including visual disability. In addition, Rs. 31.70 crore (Plan) is earmarked for North-East region for this sector.

(b) and (c) Complete data of school going visually handicapped children is not available. According to the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, out of a total 2,00,000 estimated population of school-going age visually handicapped children, it is normally held that 8 to 10% are getting basic school education. However, this coverage of visually handicapped children cannot be attributed to limited funding only. There are other factors, such as, (a) Reluctance on the part of parents to send a girl blind child to school due to social stigma; (b) Lack of awareness on the part of parents and their over protection; and (c) Location of residential schools—there are many districts in the country not having even a single residential school for the blind thereby denying accessibility to such schools.

Schemes to promote special education, including, special schools,

for children with disabilities (including visual impairment) are already being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. As per the National Education Policy and also under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 children with disabilities, including children with visual disabilities are to be given education in integrated schools as far as possible. To facilitate this process, the Department of Secondary Education and Higher Education under the Ministry of Human Resource Development is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC).

Declining Allocation of Funds for the Development of SCs/STs

1655. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that allocation of funds for the development of SCs/STs is on the declining trend compared to the other sectors/divisions of the Ministry in the recent past;

(b) if so, the reasons for the same;

(c) if not, the amount of funds in percentage terms demanded for the Scheduled Castes Development Division, Tribal Development Division by her Ministry for the last five years and funds allocated and utilized; and

(d) the similar comparative figures in respect of other divisions of her Ministry during the above period.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) No, Sir. A Statement-I is attached. (See below).

(c) and (d) A Statement-II indicating Division-wise allocation and utilisation of funds during last five years is enclosed.